



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



Volume 10, Number 1, February 2024

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD UPDATES

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) team has been off to a busy start in the new year with several of GCD's programs being underway! We continue to offer opportunities to get educated about the legislative process in Missouri and how to get involved in public policy making, and about pending legislation affecting the disability community in Missouri. See page 2 for information about the Legislative Education Project (LEP) and the 2024 Disability Rights Legislative Day (DLRD).

Our team is also in the midst of planning and preparing for the 2024 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) for high school students with disabilities. This year marks the 20th year the MO-YLF will be held! Go to page 3 to learn more about this program and how to apply or get involved.

The GCD is excited to introduce the newest team member, Reece Ellis. Reece joined our team on February 1 as the new program coordinator for the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum.

With his educational background in political science and his working experience as a summer internship supervisor, legislative assistant in the Missouri legislature and engagement specialist with the Office of Equal Opportunity, he brings a well-rounded background to this position. We are excited to work with Reece in his new role.

Another important role of the GCD is to serve as a hub for information and [resources for the disability community](#) by sharing important updates and events on the [Disability Portal](#), in this newsletter, and on social media. This issue includes information about upcoming events and trainings, tips on filing taxes, and getting registered to vote in the upcoming elections. So check out this issue to find out what's new, and be sure to sign up for our emails and follow us on social media to stay informed.

Check out the links on the left to stay connected with the GCD!



2024 LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT UNDERWAY

by Laura Mueth



Governor's Council on Disability Legislative Education Project (LEP)

Empower yourself to champion public policies that affect individuals with disabilities in Missouri. A comprehensive understanding of the legislative process can equip you with the necessary tools to effect lasting change.



**Join us for one of our free
online webinars by
signing up now!**

- January 11, 2024, 9:00–10:30 AM
- February 8, 2024, 7:00–8:30 PM
- March 7, 2024, 9:00–10:30 AM
- March 21, 2024, 1:00–2:30 PM

REGISTER ONLINE



Get Ready for the Webinar!
Visit the [LEP website](https://tinyurl.com/LEP-webinar-registration) to access educational videos about the legislative process in Missouri and gather more information.

If you have any questions, please contact us at 573.751.2600 or visit disability.mo.gov/gcd/LEP.htm

Empower yourself to champion public policies that affect individuals with disabilities in Missouri.

A comprehensive understanding of the legislative process can equip you with the necessary tools to effect lasting change.

Refresh or increase your knowledge of the legislative process in Missouri. Register for one of the remaining Legislative Education Project webinars.

Thursday, February 8, 2024 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM

Thursday, March 7, 2024 9:00 AM to 10:30 AM

Thursday, March 21, 2024 1:00 PM to 2:30 PM

These are provided at no cost to you. However, registration is required via the [LEP Registration Form](#). If you require accommodations to participate, you must register a minimum of two weeks prior to the webinar you will be attending.

To learn more about the LEP or to view related videos, modules, and/or documents, visit the [LEP web page](#).

If you have any questions, contact Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

To stay informed about pending legislation impacting the disability community, please check out the weekly [Legislative Update](#) provided by the Governor's Council on Disability. You can find it on our [website](#) or subscribe to receive it by email.

JOIN THE 2024 DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY

by Claudia Browner



The 2024 Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD) is scheduled for Wednesday, March 13, and the organizers are looking forward to another great turnout this year. The theme for this year's event is "We Are Here".

All advocates and members of the disability community are invited to come to the capitol in Jefferson City for a day of visibility and making their voices heard. There will be a rally, followed by opportunities to speak with legislators about the issues that matter most to you.

For those who are not able to attend the rally in person, a virtual option will be available to watch the event from your home or community. In addition, there will be conversations with legislators via Zoom.

Don't miss out on this exciting and empowering event!

Registration is now open on the [DRLD website](https://drlld.org/events/drlld/) at <https://drlld.org/events/drlld/>

APPLY NOW FOR THE MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability is now accepting applications for the 20th [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum \(MO-YLF\)](#) for high school students with disabilities (ages 16-21)!

The MO-YLF is a great learning opportunity for students who are looking to build on their leadership qualities and gain the skills, resources, and knowledge for a successful transition from high school to post-secondary education or employment and independent living. All while getting a college life experience, making friends, meeting mentors, and making statewide connections with others in the disability community. The MO-YLF combines learning and team building activities with fun, engaging social activities including a national keynote speaker, an adaptive sports night, a talent show, and a dance social. The MO-YLF will be held July 16—20 at the University of Missouri in Columbia.

We are excited to announce the keynote speaker for this year—Colleen Young! Colleen is a 2014 alum of the MO-YLF and world famous paralympic athlete, who has competed and won multiple medals in the paralympic games in London, Rio, and Tokyo, and is getting ready to compete in the paralympics in Paris this summer.

Don't miss out on this great opportunity for personal growth and professional development. The application deadline for student delegates is March 31, 2024. [Delegate applications can be completed online at https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf](https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf)



MO-YLF is offering volunteer opportunities!

It takes a great team of dedicated volunteers and staff members to facilitate the MO-YLF!

We are looking for individuals who can contribute to this empowering program and make a positive impact on the lives of young leaders with disabilities. Your role as a staff member or volunteer will involve guiding and supporting participants, and creating an inclusive and empowering atmosphere. We welcome MO-YLF alumni and other interested individuals (staff from independent living centers, disability organizations, college students, or teachers) to apply as staff to support, lead and mentor the delegates!

This is a great opportunity to make a difference in the lives of young individuals with disabilities while growing professionally. [Apply now at https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf/volunteer.htm](https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf/volunteer.htm).

The staff application deadline is April 15. Questions? Call 573.751.2600 to speak to our team.

REGISTRATION OPEN FOR MO-YLF WEBINARS

by Claudia Browner

Are you interested in learning more about the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF)?

Are you interested in learning more about this program?
Join us for one of the upcoming webinars:

Thursday, February 15, 2024	2:00 - 3:00 PM	<div style="background-color: #e67e22; color: white; padding: 5px 10px; border-radius: 10px; display: inline-block;">REGISTER HERE</div>
Tuesday, March 5, 2024	5:30 - 6:30 PM	

More information at
disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf

If you have any questions, please contact us
at 573.751.2600 or gcd@oa.mo.gov

The Governor's Council on Disability is offering two more free, informational webinars about the program. Each webinar includes detailed information on what takes place during MO-YLF, the benefits for students to attend, the application process, how to get involved as volunteers, plus time for questions & answers.

All prospective delegates, educators, service providers, and families are welcome to register and attend!

The webinars will be offered on Thursday, February 15 from 2:00—3:00 PM and Tuesday, March 5 from 5:30—6:30 PM. Registration is required to attend.

Please complete the Registration Form at <http://tinyurl.com/ylyfwebinar>

NEWS AND UPDATES FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

by Claudia Browner

Statewide Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) needs your input

Every three years, the Missouri Statewide Independent Living Council (MOSILC) and the 22 Centers for Independent Living (CILs) in Missouri collaborate with people in the disability community to create the SPIL. SPIL requires the input of people in the disability community to develop Missouri's new SPIL for October 2024–September 2026. Please participate by completing the survey at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MOSPILSurvey2023>



Missouri Master Plan on Aging and Disability Town Halls—Attendance and feedback invited

The goal of the Master Plan on Aging and Disability is that all Missourians, regardless of age or ability, will have access to person-centered programs and services necessary to help them age in their environment of choice in a safe and healthy manner. There are 10 in-person town halls scheduled around the state in February and March, and two virtual options on March 21. The Advisory Council is asking for input and feedback from Missourians and invites you to participate in a town hall meeting! Find a date and location near you or register for a virtual town hall at <https://health.mo.gov/seniors/masterplanaging>

Emergency Management Disability Awareness Training (EMDAT)—Registration open

There are two opportunities to participate in upcoming, free EMDAT events: The first is **March 4–5 in Jefferson City**—this training is intended for those who have an emergency management role in Region F counties (Audrain, Boone, Callaway, Camden, Cole, Cooper, Gasconade, Howard, Miller, Moniteau, Montgomery, Morgan, and Osage) and the second is **March 6–7 in Poplar Bluff** for those in Region E counties (Bollinger, Butler, Cape Girardeau, Dunklin, Iron, Madison, Mississippi, New Madrid, Pemiscot, Ripley, Scott, Stoddard and Wayne). Individuals who want to learn about the process and take an active role in assisting peers and colleagues can sign up for a half-day session on the second day of each event. Click on the location to get to the registration link.

Digital Days coming to Macon and Hannibal in February

The Missouri Assistive Technology (MOAT), Missouri DD Council, County Connections, and LOQW, Inc. are offering two free events for individuals with developmental disabilities, families, and advocates. The events will be held in February 5 at 10 AM at First Christian Church in [Macon](#), and February 6 at 2 PM in [Hannibal](#). Sign up for FREE or low-cost internet, explore assistive technology, learn about digital safety, and understand the need for digital literacy. Click on the location to get to the registration link.

Tax Season is here—Free Information and Assistance available

Tax season is here and for many people filing taxes can be confusing and stressful. The National Disability Institute has put together some great information and resources to help you prepare and find out where to file our taxes for free, tax credits you might be eligible for, and how you can make the most of your tax refund money.

Check out the information at <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/financial-resilience-center/taxes-and-tax-prep/>

Learn about Accessible Voting and how to Register to Vote

It's not too early to get prepared for this year's elections so you can participate and have your voice heard. The Disability Portal provides a page with [information about voting](#) including a video about accessible voting, and how to [register to vote](#).

Warming Center Sites in Missouri

Winter weather has brought cold temperature, ice, and snow in January, and more winter weather may be headed our way before we get to Spring. Extreme cold weather can be especially dangerous to small children, older adults, and those who are critically ill or individuals with disabilities. Warming centers provide a warm, safe place for people during cold weather. If you need assistance due to cold weather, click on the link to find a [warming center near you](#) or call 800-392-0210.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Joan Bergstrom, Ed. D, Lee's Summit
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **February 14, 2024**
[Black History Month celebration, Truman Building, Jefferson City](#)
- **March 13, 2024**
[Disability Rights Legislative Day, State Capitol, Jefferson City \(and virtual\)](#)
- **April 8—9, 2024**
[Power Up Assistive Technology Conference/GCD Awards presentation, Columbia](#)
- **June 9—12, 2024**
[National ADA Symposium, Minneapolis, MN](#)
- **June 12—14, 2024**
[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference, Osage Beach](#)
- **June 17—20, 2024**
[National APSE Conference, Charlotte, NC](#)
- **June 26—28, 2024**
[Transition Training Institute, Columbia](#)
- **July 16—20, 2024**
[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, Columbia](#)

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD AWARDS LEADERS IN INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) recognizes leaders in inclusion and youth leadership through its annual Inclusion Awards and Youth Leadership Awards programs. These programs are intended to raise awareness about the importance of advocacy and inclusion for individuals with disabilities in all aspects of community living, while recognizing and honoring the accomplishments of the award recipients.

On April 9, the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) presented the awards to the 2023 awards recipients at the Power Up Assistive Technology Conference in Columbia, where more than 480 conference attendees and exhibitors were gathered to celebrate the winners and hear about their great accomplishments.

The 2023 winners are:

Inclusion Award—Alisha Favazza, Hollister R-V School District, Hollister

Inclusion Award Honorable Mention—Kristi Kliwer, Abilities First, Springfield

Youth Leadership Award—Lydia Olmsted, Columbia

Youth Leadership Award Honorable Mention—Margot Epstein



Photos: (from left to right) Alisha Favazza, Lydia Olmsted, Margot Epstein.

Not pictured: Kristi Kliwer

Read the complete [news release here](#), and visit the [Inclusion Awards](#) and [Youth Leadership Awards](#) websites to find out more about these great individuals and their amazing accomplishments. You will also find information about all of the 2023 award nominees on these websites. Award nominations for the 2024 awards will be available online this fall.

STAY CONNECTED

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GCD COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

by Claudia Browner

On March 15, 2024, Governor Parson appointed Stacy Elster of Wildwood, Missouri as the newest Council member to the Governor's Council on Disability. The GCD welcomes Ms. Elster in her new role and congratulates her on her appointment.

The GCD recognizes three outgoing Council members for their years of service on the Council. They are: Joan Bergstrom of Lee's Summit, Traci Ritter of Cape Girardeau, and James Trout of St. Louis. The Council is grateful for their active participation, support and dedication to the Council and wishes them well.



Photos from left to right:
Joan Bergstrom, Traci Ritter, and
James Trout with GCD director
Claudia Browner

Individuals who are interested in serving as Council members for the Governor's Council on Disability can apply online at boards.mo.gov. Applications are reviewed by the Boards and Commissions office and Council members are appointed by the Governor.

VOLUNTEER-STAFF APPLICATIONS FOR MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP OPEN UNTIL APRIL 15

by Reece Ellis



Volunteer Opportunity
July 15-20, 2024
at MU in Columbia



Volunteer Staff Needed!
Apply by April 15!



The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is a leadership program designed for young adults with disabilities to learn from successful leaders and role models.

Apply for one of our volunteer staff positions to support the youth participants at this week-long, empowering program on MU Campus!

Make a positive difference in the lives of young adults with disabilities and gain professional leadership experience and connections.

Learn more about this exciting volunteer opportunity at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf>

A friendly reminder! The [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf) (MO-YLF) will be held this year from July 16th* to 20th at the University of Missouri in Columbia, MO. We're still seeking passionate volunteers to help make this transformative experience a reality for high school students with disabilities (ages 16-21).

MO-YLF volunteers play a crucial role in creating a transformative experience for students. They help facilitate delegate orientation/registration, provide mentorship, assist with daily tasks, and ensure a safe as well as supportive environment where students can develop leadership skills, build self-confidence, and gain valuable knowledge about disability advocacy and transitioning to adulthood.

Even if you can't commit to the entire week, we have flexible volunteer options that might suit your availability! You can find out more about applying here: <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylyf/volunteer.htm>

If you or your organization would like to help us make this great program possible, please contact GCD for more information by email at reece.ellis@oa.mo.gov or by calling our office at (800) 877-8249 or (573) 751-2600.

* Volunteer-staff arrive July 15 for orientation and to prepare for the delegates' arrival on July 16.

DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY 2024 HAPPENINGS

by Laura Mueth

Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD) 2024 was Wednesday, March 13. Over 800 people attended either in-person at the Capitol or virtually and demonstrated to legislators that ***We Are Here***. This theme was chosen by the planning committee because it emphasized that people with disabilities live in Missouri communities and that they were at the Capitol.



Providing an event like this takes a lot of planning and commitment. Each of the following organizations had a representative on the planning committee: the Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, Empower: Abilities, People First, Boone County Family Resources, St. Louis Arc, The Arc of the Ozarks, Abilities First, the Arc of Missouri, UCP Heartland and GCD. We collaborated frequently beginning in October 2023 to make it a success.

Transportation, employment, and the caregiver crisis were carry-over topics from last year's event. The caregiver crisis and employment topics were addressed differently this year by discussing the intersection of the two topics in that having a caregiver (aide, attendant, direct support professional) often

allows individuals with disabilities to be employed. Therefore, having a strong caregiver workforce is critical to individuals being involved in community life. Housing and accessibility were new topics discussed by the rally speakers.

In-person attendees had the opportunity to visit with several disability-related organizations to learn more about offerings as well as talk one-on-one with legislators or their staff. For virtual participants, three virtual afternoon learning sessions were also available. These sessions included more in-depth information on transportation, the caregiver crisis, and housing. Participants were provided with information on ways they could become engaged with these concerns in addition to being encouraged to visit with legislators the following week during the Legislative Spring Break.

To speak to the crowd, the planning committee was pleased to welcome the deputy treasurer, Clayton Campbell as well as Representatives Melanie Stinnett, Cody Smith, Wendy Hausman, Bridget Walsh Moore, Deb Lavender, along with Senator Lauren Arthur. All the legislators selected to speak had some connection to the disability community whether through personal experience or legislation. The rest of the speakers were individuals with lived experience as individuals with disabilities or family members. Those were Katie Johnson, Scott Steelman-Rhoden, Jeffrey Foust, Anushka Shah, Wayne Lee, Susie Parker, Miss Missouri 2023 Hayley Leach and her brother Matthew Leach. Michkael Cross served as the emcee.

New for this year was an Access Team. It was comprised of individuals experienced with the Capitol who were available to accompany attendees to legislative visits or to provide assistance with navigating the Capitol.

If you attended this year and have not completed the [feedback survey](#), please do so. The planning committee would like to hear from everyone. If you missed the day entirely or want to see it again, you can view it at [DRLD livestream](#).



VETERANS UNITED SHOWCASES COMMITMENT TO MO-YLF AND EMPLOYEE FAMILIES

by Reece Ellis

During a company-wide event on February 12th, GCD staff were fortunate to witness an incredible display of generosity from Veterans United. TJ Clime, a recent graduate of Capital City High School and a 2023 Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) delegate, presented a \$5,000 sponsorship check from Veterans United to the GCD staff. This sponsorship supports MO-YLF, a program close to the Clime family's heart. T.J. was joined by his parents, Sara and Craig Clime. However, this act of kindness wasn't the only gift Veterans United had in store. With the help of GCD, they orchestrated a fantastic surprise that left a lasting impression on everyone in attendance.

The presentation that day held even greater significance for those familiar with TJ's story. TJ's week at MO-YLF was his first independent adventure away from home and proved to be extremely formative in developing new confidence and independence for him. Before the presentation of the sponsorship, we heard from Craig, TJ's father, who attended the MO-YLF closing ceremony. He witnessed firsthand the positive change in TJ and felt immense gratitude towards the program. This appreciation grew even stronger upon learning that his employer, Veterans United, was a dedicated sponsor of MO-YLF.



Veterans United's generosity extended far beyond the sponsorship presented by TJ. TJ's Duchenne muscular dystrophy necessitates ongoing medical care, requiring frequent trips, including twice-yearly visits to a specialized center in Cincinnati, Ohio. Their current vehicle presented limitations and anxieties during these crucial journeys. Recognizing the Clime family's situation, Veterans United employees surprised them with a generous donation to help purchase an accessible van. This incredible act of support will provide the Clime family with a newfound sense of freedom and peace of mind. As Sara Clime, TJ's mom, stated, "This will provide a freedom of life that I don't think we can fully comprehend at this point."

The GCD staff were honored to be a part of this special occasion. Witnessing the immense gratitude of the Clime family and the spontaneous outpouring of support from VU employees created an unforgettable experience for everyone involved.

APRIL IS AUTISM ACCEPTANCE MONTH



Autism Acceptance Month is observed in April each year in partnership with World Autism Awareness Day on April 2, promoting the inclusion and acceptance of individuals diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder and breaking the stigma of people living with autism.

Learn more by visiting the [US Department of Health & Human Services' Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee website](#)

NEWS AND UPDATES FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

by Claudia Browner

Social Security Administration warns about Scams

The Social Security Administration (SSA) designated March 7 as National “Slam the Scam” Day, an outreach campaign raising public awareness of Social Security scams and other government imposter scams. The SSA asks you to share the following tips with clients, friends, and family members:

- Hang up on suspicious calls from “government officials” calling about a problem with your Social Security number or account
- NEVER make payments with gift cards, wire transfers, or by mailing cash
- Report Social Security scams to [OIG.SSA.GOV](https://www.ssa.gov/01enr026.htm)
- Report other scams to [reportfraud.ftc.gov](https://www.ftc.gov/report-fraud)
- Download and share the [info graphic](#) (image on right)



Accessible Air Travel

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has announced a new proposed rule ensuring airline passengers who use wheelchairs would be able to travel safely and with dignity. The proposed rule would be the biggest expansion of rights for wheelchair users since 2008. The rule's three major action items would be: 1. Penalties and remedies for wheelchair mishandling, 2. Safe, dignified, and prompt assistance, and 3. Improved standards on planes. DOT encourages members of the public to submit comments on the proposed rule. The proposal can be found at <https://www.transportation.gov/airconsumer/latest-news>

Missouri State Parks offer Virtual Tours of Historic Sites

The Missouri Department of Natural Resources' State Parks Division has created an accessible, [virtual tour of the Bothwell Lodge Historic Site](#). Accessibility features include audio narration and captioning. This is the first of more than 21 virtual tours that will soon be completed and available online at [mostateparks.com](https://www.mostateparks.com)

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REPEAL OF UGLY LAWS

by Reece Ellis

2024 marks the 50th anniversary of the end of *Ugly Laws* in the United States. Many people today are unfamiliar with so-called *Ugly Laws* but starting in the mid-19th century many cities and states enacted these laws as a way to criminalize disability. The first *Ugly Law* was passed in San Francisco in 1867, it read “any person, who is diseased, maimed, mutilated or deformed in any way, so as to be an unsightly or disgusting object, to expose himself or herself to public view.”

Similar laws followed, Chicago in 1881, New Orleans in 1883, Denver in 1889, and in 1891 the entire state of Pennsylvania. These statutes allowed for the jailing and/or fining of individuals with cognitive and physical disabilities for simply participating in society. One of the few exceptions made was for performances, such as circuses, side shows, and human zoos which were rife with economic exploitation. These laws were often arbitrarily enforced, but prosecution could mean being confined to a psychiatric institution or forced labor on a work farm.

The Great Depression saw a sharp decline in enforcement of Ugly Laws, though many localities retained them on the books. Criminal focus shifted from targeting people with disabilities to criminalizing vagrancy, but discrimination persisted. This became evident in 1972 when disability rights activists Art Honeyman (who has cerebral palsy) and Richard Pimentel (who is deaf) were denied service and arrested at a Portland pancake house under an Ugly Law. This incident is believed to have been a major catalyst for the repeal of the remaining Ugly Laws in the United States, culminating in Chicago's successful removal of the last such law in 1974.

Though the concept of Ugly Laws seems barbaric today, their existence serves as a stark reminder of the historical mistreatment of people with disabilities. These discriminatory laws aimed to control who could access public spaces, effectively erasing people with disabilities from everyday life. The 50th anniversary of their eradication is a moment to celebrate the progress made in inclusion and accessibility.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

- **April 23—25, 2024**
[Charting the LifeCourse Showcase 2024, Kansas City](#)
- **May 7, 2024**
[Mental Health Champions Banquet, Jefferson City](#)
- **May 20—21, 2024**
[Aging with Developmental Disabilities Conference, St. Charles](#)
- **June 9—12, 2024**
[National ADA Symposium, Minneapolis, MN](#)
- **June 12—14, 2024**
[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference, Osage Beach](#)
- **June 17—20, 2024**
[National APSE Conference, Charlotte, NC](#)
- **June 26—28, 2024**
[Transition Training Institute, Columbia](#)
- **July 16—20, 2024**
[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, Columbia](#)
- **July 17—19, 2024**
[APSE-MO Employment Summit, Columbia](#)
- **July 24—26, 2024**
[Special Education Director Academy \(SEDA\), Columbia](#)
- **August 25—27, 2024**
[Real Voices - Real Choices Conference, Margaritaville Lake Resort](#)
- **September 9—11, 2024**
[Ma4 Show Me Summit on Aging & Health 2024, Springfield](#)

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GCD: Governor's Council on Disability



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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD LAUNCHES ANNUAL NDEAM POSTER CONTEST

by Claudia Browner

The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) promotes and raises awareness about the importance of inclusion of individuals with disabilities in all aspects of community living including employment. Each year, the GCD hosts a poster contest to receive artwork from Missouri artists with and without disabilities to create an awareness poster for National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), which is celebrated annually in October.

The US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy has recently announced the 2024 NDEAM theme as **"Access to Good Jobs for All"**, highlighting the equally important issues of expanding the number of employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities as well as the quality of those employment opportunities.

As we prepare to celebrate and honor NDEAM statewide throughout the month of October, we invite Missouri residents to participate in the poster contest by submitting their artwork for a chance to be featured on the GCD's 2024 NDEAM Poster, which will be distributed statewide, and featured on social media, and on the GCD and NDEAM websites.

Learn more about the GCD NDEAM Poster Contest and download the entry form at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest>

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JULY 26 MARKS THE 34TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADA

Each year on July 26, the United States celebrates the anniversary of the signing of an important piece of civil rights legislation—the Americans with Disabilities Act known as the ADA. This landmark legislation protects the rights of individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, with the goal of full participation, equal opportunity, independent living and economic self-sufficiency. The GCD proudly supports the ADA and celebrates this important law that works to ensure all people with disabilities have the same rights and opportunities as everyone else.

For ideas on how you can celebrate the ADA, visit <https://adaanniversary.org/ideas-celebrate-ada/>

Photo credit: ADA National Network (adata.org)

ADA34 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
★ 1990 - 2024 ★ ★ ★ ★ ★
Americans with Disabilities Act
Celebrate the ADA! July 26, 2024

2024 LEGISLATIVE SESSION IS COMPLETE

by Laura Mueth

This year's legislative session is over and was very different. The biggest difference was the appropriation process. The process started earlier than usual and concluded later than usual. There was little to no public testimony taken by the committees responsible for crafting the budget bills. Instead of going to individual conference committees, the chairs of the House and Senate committees responsible for the bills worked out the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bills. Another difference was two record setting filibusters in the Senate. One by some Republicans which lasted approximately forty-one hours with the other by Democrats which lasted almost fifty hours.

A total of twenty-six non-appropriation bills were Truly Agreed To and Finally Passed (TAFP) by the time the General Assembly adjourned on May 17. Only seven are impacting individuals with disabilities in some way. They are Senate Bills (SB) 727, 748, 756, 912, and 1111 as well as House Bills (HB) 1495 and 2287.

Two bills already signed by Governor Parson are [SB 727](#) and [HB 2287](#). Each one includes provisions related to various aspects of education.

The Federal Reimbursement Allowance expiration date or FRA bill ([SB 748](#)) was extended. The FRA now has five years until it will need to be renewed.

Veteran suicide prevention was passed in two bills. The first was [HB 1495](#). This was the veteran suicide prevention bill. The second was [SB 912](#) which also included a portion that allows individuals who have verification of a permanent disability from the United States Department of Veterans Affairs to not have to continue to show proof of disability when renewing their disabled plates or placard.

In [SB 1111](#) is the requirement for individuals wanting to establish, maintain, or operate a prescribed pediatric extended care facility in the state to have a license from the Department of Health and Senior Services. [SB 756](#) clarifies SB 190 (senior citizen property tax credit) which was TAFP in 2023.

Of the two Senate Joint Resolutions (SJR) that passed, only one impacts people with disabilities. [SJR 78](#) has a portion which allows voters to decide whether all elections will be done by either paper ballot or as stated in law by mechanical means.

The Governor has until mid-July to act on the non-appropriation bills.

The main appropriation bills are still awaiting action by the Governor. The new fiscal year begins July 1 so he must act on those bills before then. The budget passed by the House and Senate contains cuts to programs for people with disabilities. You can view all the bills at [Appropriation Bills](#).

If something important to you made it through the process this year, you might consider thanking the legislators who aided the issue through. If an issue important to you did not make it this year, begin talking to legislators and candidates about the issue this summer and fall. Many will be attending events and meeting with citizens for re-election and election in November. This provides an opportunity for you to share your concerns and issues with those legislators and candidates.



20 YEARS OF MO-YLF

by Reece Ellis



Twenty-six delegates and several staff are preparing themselves for an engaging week at the annual Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) which will be celebrating its 20th program year! MO-YLF will be hosted at the University of Missouri in Columbia, July 16—20.

As we celebrate two decades of empowering young leaders with disabilities, MO-YLF remains committed to nurturing the next generation of advocates, change-makers, and trailblazers. When we reflect on the success of this program, we are reminded of the continued support of our sponsors, volunteers, and alumni, whose contributions make this transformative experience possible year after year. Thank you.

We are excited to welcome delegates from all parts of our state and the diversity of experiences and ideas that they will share with us and each other over the course of the week. A point of pride for staff this year is how overwhelmed we have been by the support of our alumni. This year our keynote speaker, Colleen Young ('14) a medal winning paralympic swimmer, is an alumna of YLF. Additionally, several of the career professionals participating in our mentor day will be alumni. Finally, all of the Facilitators and Team Leaders who will guide delegates through the week are alumni. We appreciate their dedication and commitment to giving back to the program to help nurture leadership skills in the next cohort of delegates.

Throughout the week, delegates will engage in various learning experiences and activities tailored to re-enforce vital skills and values. From sessions focused on independent living to a day in the Missouri General Assembly to learn about advocacy to a conversation about disability history and culture in the United States, MO-YLF aims to equip delegates with the tools they need to navigate the transition from high school. We look forward to what promises to be yet another year of meaningful growth and connection for our delegates!

The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is completely funded by sponsorships and in-kind donations. The generous support we receive from individuals and organizations allows us to operate this program every year, at full capacity, at no cost to students. This allows young people from economic backgrounds of all kinds to participate in what is often described as a "life changing opportunity".

One way is to be sponsor through a monetary donation. We have many different levels of sponsorships, and every dollar goes a long way towards the longevity of this program. A second way to contribute to MO-YLF, is through in-kind donations. Each of our delegates and staff get a welcome backpack with different types of promotional items. We will have roughly 60 backpacks to fill this year and still need items for them, but need your help to make this possible. Other items that we are needing, include: giveaway/door prizes (gift cards or larger items).

Find out more about the sponsorship opportunities at <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/y/f/sponsors.htm>

THANK YOU TO OUR 2024 MO-YLF SPONSORS!

Gold Level	Silver Level	Bronze Level
 Veterans United Foundation	 Missouri Centers for Independent Living IMPROVING LIVES THROUGH INDEPENDENCE	 home state health.
 FINCK Supported Living Services	 Missouri Statewide Independent Living Council	 UMKC Institute for Human Development
Supporter Level	In-Kind Donations	
 MACDDS MISSOURI ASSOCIATION OF COUNTY DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES SERVICES	 College of Agriculture, Food & Natural Resources University of Missouri	 Pre-Employment Transition Services University of Missouri
 MCDHH MISSOURI COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING	 BUCK'S ICE CREAM	 Extension University of Missouri

A heartfelt thank you goes out to our 2024 sponsors who have already committed to supporting the MO-YLF!

The Missouri Youth Leadership Forum is hosted by the Governor's Council on Disability in collaboration with MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, MOCIL, Paraquad and Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation.



MEET COUNCIL MEMBER STACEY ELSTER

by Claudia Browner



On March 15, 2024, Governor Parson appointed the newest Council member for the Governor's Council on Disability, Stacey Elster. Stacey mostly grew up in St. Charles and currently resides in St. Louis County. She graduated from Webster University with a Masters of Art in Teaching. She holds Special Education certificates for teaching in the areas of Severe Developmental Disabilities and Mild to Moderate Disabilities. Stacey has over 16 years of experience within the field of providing services to individuals with disabilities. She spent seven of those years as a Special Education Teacher in the Special School District. Stacey has been an adjunct professor in the School of Education at Webster University for over 13 years. She prepares pre-service teachers to provide inclusive and evidence-based instructional experiences for students with disabilities.

Stacey joined Lafayette Industries in 2016 and is currently Chief Program Officer. She has launched several initiatives in this role, including designing a self-regulation program and sensory room, expanding services to include employment training programs and life-enhancement programs, and overseeing the positive behavior supports programming within the facility-based employment setting. In 2020, Lafayette was awarded funding from the Productive Living Board to launch STEPUP, which is a unique long-term competitive employment training program focusing on social cognitive skills while gaining experience within a partner business. The program was awarded the prestigious "Cutting Edge" Award by the Missouri Association of County Developmental Disabilities Services in October of 2021 and the *St. Louis Business Journal's* Corporate Philanthropy Award honoree in 2022. Stacey was recognized by Special School District as a Special Ambassador in 2019 for her exceptional efforts on behalf of students graduating from Special School District. Program development and enhancement remain at the core of Stacey's career. Stacey's career supported her ability to seek early intervention services for her son. She hopes to ensure all Missourians have knowledge of all available resources for their individual needs.

NEWS AND UPDATES FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

by Claudia Browner

Accessible National Parks

Summer is the perfect time for traveling and sightseeing. Discover accessible adventures with the National Park Service. The National Park Service is dedicated to accessibility, offering resources for visitors and employees with disabilities. Each park's website features an accessibility section for trip planning. Plus, the [Access Pass](#) provides lifetime access to 2,000+ federal recreation sites. Visit <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/accessibility/index.htm> for more information.

New Rule on Accessibility of Web Content and Mobile Apps

The Federal Register has published the US Department of Justice's final rule on accessibility requirements for web content and mobile applications provided by state and local governments, ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities.

A [Fact Sheet provided by ADA.gov](#) summarizes the requirements of the new rule. The full rule can be found on the [Federal Register website](#).

HHS issues New Rule to Strengthen Nondiscrimination Protections and Advance Civil Rights in Health Care

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) have issued a final rule under Section 1557 of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) advancing protections against discrimination in health care. Find out more on the [Federal Register website](#).

HHS finalizes Rule to Strengthen Protections against Disability Discrimination

The US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through its Office for Civil Rights (OCR) finalized a rule that prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability and bolsters protections for people with disabilities under Section 504 of the Rehab Act, which prohibits discrimination in programs and activities that receive federal funding. Find out more details at

<https://www.hhs.gov/about/news/2024/05/01/hhs-finalizes-rule-strengthening-protections-against-disability-discrimination.html>

Justice Department launches updated Voting Rights and Elections Website

Visit the one-stop resource providing [voting and elections information website](#) for more information.

111TH BIRTHDAY OF VIRGINIA "GINI" LAURIE

by Reece Ellis

Virginia "Gini" Laurie is often hailed as one of the "Grandmothers of the Independent Living Movement" and her legacy includes advocating for what would eventually become the first Centers for Independent Living.

Virginia Grace Wilson Laurie was born in St. Louis Missouri on June 10, 1913. Her life became defined by serious hardships her family endured due to a nationwide polio epidemic the year before she was born. In her words from a dedication in 1988:

"In 1912, the year before I was born, four siblings were struck by polio: a 12-year-old sister was mildly disabled, a 6-year-old brother very severely disabled, and two sisters, aged 3 and 9, died within days at St. John's. In their memory, my mother painted a mural on the ceiling of the St. John's chapel depicting them as angels. Sixteen years later, I watched my significantly disabled brother die of pneumonia and underventilation at St. John's. His funeral mass was in St. John's Chapel, underneath the mural of our sisters."



She was named for the two sisters that predeceased her, Virginia, and Grace. Gini Laurie's early life experiences laid the groundwork for her lifelong commitment to advocating for individuals with disabilities in general, and polio survivors in particular. She would go on to serve as a volunteer at the Toomey Pavilion in Cleveland working in polio rehabilitation during the 1940s and 50s. During this time she worked with countless patients and gained superior understanding of the importance of connections to one's community in rehabilitation. She established what would become *the Rehabilitation Gazette* to connect polio survivors across America who could share stories, tips, advice, and support.

According to the CDC, there were more than 21,000 paralytic cases of polio reported in 1952, but by 1965 just 10 years after the introduction of the Salk vaccine, there were only 61 cases in the entire United States. This decline in cases was a cause to celebrate as far as public health is concerned, however public interest in the well-being of polio survivors declined as the threat receded. Attendant care up until that point had been largely financed by private gifts made to the March of Dimes, which all but stopped funding services due to a lack of donations just 4 years after the introduction of the Salk vaccine. In 1959 there were no Great Society programs like Medicaid or Medicare and Social Security Disability Insurance at the time only applied to individuals over 50 years old and under 18 years old, so this meant that many thousands of Americans were left with very significant need. Laurie organized letter writing campaigns by disabled Americans that helped reignite disability rights as a policy issue in federal politics in the 1960s. Later, Congress would pass the Social Security Amendments of 1960 and the Vocational Rehabilitation Amendments of 1965 which expanded benefits and support for all individuals with disabilities to pursue independent living.

Later in life Laurie would become the only nondisabled member of the board of directors for the American Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities. Laurie spent the rest of her life active in disability rights advocacy, giving lectures internationally as well as mentoring the next generation of leaders, both with and without disabilities. As we celebrate what would have been her 111th birthday, let us not only honor her activism and achievement but recommit ourselves to the ongoing struggle for inclusivity, accessibility, and equal opportunity for all Americans.



Adult Abuse and Neglect Hotline
Make a difference. Make the call.
1-800-392-0210
Health.Mo.Gov/abuse



JUNE 15 IS WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Each year, an estimated 5 million older adults are abused, neglected, or exploited. Older Americans lose an estimated \$2.6 billion or more annually due to elder financial abuse and exploitation. It can happen to anyone including family members and neighbors. World Elder Abuse Awareness Day aims to raise awareness and promote a better understanding of abuse and neglect, and recognizes the significance of elder abuse as a public health and human rights issue.

To report adult abuse or neglect in Missouri, call 1-800-392-0210 or make a report online at health.mo.gov/abuse

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability— Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Lead Administrative Support Assistant

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

- **June 9—12, 2024**
[National ADA Symposium, Minneapolis, MN](#)
- **June 12—14, 2024**
[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference, Osage Beach](#)
- **June 17—20, 2024**
[National APSE Conference, Charlotte, NC](#)
- **June 26—28, 2024**
[Transition Training Institute, Columbia](#)
- **July 16—20, 2024**
[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum, Columbia](#)
- **July 17—19, 2024**
[APSE-MO Employment Summit, Columbia](#)
- **July 24—26, 2024**
[Special Education Director Academy \(SEDA\), Columbia](#)
- **August 25—27, 2024**
[Real Voices - Real Choices Conference, Margaritaville Lake Resort](#)
- **September 3—5, 2024**
[2024 Missouri Transit Conference & Expo](#)
- **September 9—11, 2024**
[Ma4 Show Me Summit on Aging & Health 2024, Springfield](#)
- **September 26—27, 2024**
[Center for Disability Inclusion 2024 Inclusion Summit, Kansas City/virtual](#)
- **October 9—11, 2024**
[MACDDS Annual Conference, Columbia](#)

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

>>> GCD Newsletter

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[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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GCD HOSTS 20TH ANNUAL MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Reece Ellis

I have the distinct privilege of serving as Program Coordinator for the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF) which this year was held July 16-20, 2024, at the University of Missouri in Columbia. This transformative event brought together 24 high school students with disabilities from 17 counties across Missouri. These young leaders, referred to as delegates, engaged in an intensive week of learning and growth, exploring topics such as leadership, career development, disability history and advocacy, self-determination, mentorship, and independent living.

Celebrating its 20th year, the MO-YLF is an annual event hosted by the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) in collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation, MU Pre-Employment Transition Services, Missouri Centers for Independent Living, and Paraquad. Since its inception in 2001, the program has empowered 414 delegates to become active and engaged leaders within their communities.



The success of MO-YLF relies heavily on the dedication and support of volunteers. This year, our team included members from GCD, the Office of Equal Opportunity, various disability organizations, and 15 MO-YLF alumni who generously donated their time and expertise. This year, an alumna delivered the opening keynote speech – Colleen Young, a paralympic swimmer who first participated in MO-YLF in 2014 and has competed in the London, Tokyo, and Rio Paralympics. She is set to compete in the upcoming Paris Paralympics. Her journey and achievements set a powerful tone for the week.



Throughout the program, delegates not only set professional and personal goals but also engaged with mentors from the disability community, learned about employment and career development, took part in a mock legislative debate, and contributed to a community service project.

(Continued on page 2)

GCD HOSTS ANNUAL MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

(Continued from page 1)

Evening activities provided opportunities for fun and bonding, including an adaptive sports night, a talent show, and a dance. The week concluded with a resource fair and graduation ceremony, where delegates and alumni shared their experiences and insights, celebrating their growth and achievements.

One of the most rewarding aspects of MO-YLF is that upon completion of the program, participants often apply to return as team leaders and facilitators in subsequent years. This continuity not only enhances their leadership skills but also strengthens the MO-YLF community, creating a supportive network for new participants.

For more details about the MO-YLF, visit disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf and follow the MO-YLF Facebook page [@MOLeadershipForum](https://www.facebook.com/MOLeadershipForum) for updates on upcoming events.



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL COMING SOON

by Laura Mueth

The 2024 [Legislative Priorities Poll](#) will be available for completion beginning on August 26 and closing on November 1 at 5:00 p.m. Each year the Governor's Council on Disability distributes a Legislative Priorities Poll to get a better understanding of issues important to Missourians with disabilities and those who work and live with them. The Poll results are compiled into a report and shared with the legislators and elected officials prior to the 2025 legislative session.



For those who have completed it in previous years, this version will be shorter and have a different look. Even with the changes, it continues to be an opportunity for you to share with us, as well as state legislators and elected officials, issues you have with education, housing, transportation, employment, and health care for people with disabilities along with changes you would like to see.

Keep your eye out for the Qualtrics link to participate. It will be distributed via email and posted on GCD's [Facebook](#) page and [Poll](#) web page. Other versions which can be completed and returned to our office will also be available through those avenues. Our staff will be available to assist anyone who has difficulty understanding the questions or completing it independently.

If you have not received the Poll in the past and would like to receive it directly once it is ready, contact Laura Mueth at Laura.Mueth@oa.mo.gov.

Because we want to hear from a wide variety of individuals, we encourage sharing the Poll with anyone connected to disability issues. This includes people with disabilities, families, employers, friends, employees, medical professionals, caregivers, agency staff, community members, educators, organizations, etc. The GCD looks forward to seeing the responses.

RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT EMPLOYMENT INCLUSION

by Claudia Browner



The Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) promotes and raises awareness about the importance of employment inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

Each year, the GCD hosts a poster contest to create an awareness poster for the month of October, which is celebrated nationwide as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The theme for the 2024 NDEAM is **Access to Good Jobs for All**.

The poster contest is intended to spark conversations about the important contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce and provide Missouri artists an opportunity to have their artwork featured in the awareness poster. The artwork shall incorporate the NDEAM theme or relate to employment, inclusion or community.

Don't miss your opportunity to participate—submit your artwork now. Artwork entries must be received by September 15!

Learn more about the poster contest and download the entry form at disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest.

MEET COUNCIL MEMBER JASON SCHOTT

by Claudia Browner



On June 5, 2024, Governor Parson appointed Jason Schott of Ste. Genevieve as a Council member to the Governor's Council on Disability. Jason was born and raised in Ste. Genevieve County and currently lives in the Zell area. He has been married to his wife Sarah for 23 years and they have a son, Braden, who is 20 and lives with autism, who keeps him grounded. Jason graduated from Jefferson College with an Associates Degree in Criminal Justice and Lindenwood University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Criminal Justice.

Jason has been in a law enforcement career for 28 years working for several agencies. He has held many different positions in his career including patrolman, K9 Officer, detective and road patrol commander. Jason currently serves as the Chief Deputy at the Ste. Genevieve County Sheriff's Office at the rank of Major, where he oversees the daily operations of the Sheriff's Office's

Detention Center and Road Division. In 2016, Jason was selected and graduated from the FBI National Academy for law enforcement executives. He currently serves as the President of the Eastern Missouri Chapter of the FBI National Academy Associates.

Outside his career, Jason is very active in his community. He served on the Board of Directors for the Ste. Genevieve County Community Center, the Ste. Genevieve County Community Center Foundation and several TIF Districts. Jason has also served as the President of the Ste. Genevieve Chamber of Commerce and is the President of the Chamber Foundation and President of the Ste. Genevieve County 911 Tax Board.

His greatest enjoyment comes from being on the Ste. Genevieve County SB-40 Board, where he has served as a board member for 18 years and as the President of the Board for 15 years. Some of the SB-40 Board's greatest accomplishments are opening a provider agency, constructing an all-inclusive ball field and opening a Common Grounds Coffee Shop that employs individuals with disabilities.

MEET COUNCIL MEMBER STEVE AHRENS

by Claudia Browner



On June 5, 2024, Governor Parson appointed Steve Ahrens of Jefferson City as a Council member to the Governor's Council on Disability. Steve currently serves as Chief Strategy Officer for Missouri Propane Gas Association, after having led the statewide trade association as its President and CEO for more than 24 years.

Previously, Steve served in state government as a designated principal assistant for the Missouri Office of Administration and as director of the Publications Division for the Missouri Secretary of State's Office. Mr. Ahrens holds a Bachelor of Science degree from (Southwest) Missouri State University.

Steve and his wife, Carla, have lived in Jefferson City since 1985. They have four children and six grandchildren.

NEWS AND UPDATES FOR THE DISABILITY COMMUNITY

by Claudia Browner

Caravan for Disability Freedom and Justice 2024 coming to Missouri

The Caravan for Disability Freedom and Justice has been traveling across the county and will be making stops in St. Louis on August 8 and Columbia on August 12. Visit <https://thedisabilitycaravan.com/> for more information.

Enforcing the Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) includes five different sections, known as titles, that outline the rights of people with disabilities and responsibilities of governments, businesses, and organizations covered by the legislation. A new [Fact Sheet](#) provided by the ADA National Network summarizes which federal agencies enforce the different titles of the ADA. Visit adata.org/enforcing-the-ADA for more information.

Helping Workers with Disabilities get ahead through Good Jobs: A Toolkit of Practical Strategies

The US Department of Labor's Office of Disability Policy (ODEP) has developed a comprehensive new resource toolkit to help employers in high demand industries recruit, hire, retain and advance workers with disabilities. Find out more at dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/good_jobs/toolkit

Justice Department to publish Final Rule to improve Access to Medical Care for People with Disabilities

On the 34th anniversary of the ADA on July 26, 2024, US Attorney General Merrick B. Garland signed a final rule under Title II of the ADA to improve access to medical diagnostic equipment for people with disabilities, including equipment such as medical examination tables, scales, dental chairs, x-ray and mammography machines. Making this equipment accessible assures people with disabilities have equal access to medical care.

The rule will soon be available for review on the Federal Register's website at www.federalregister.gov and a Fact Sheet providing information about the final rule will be available on the ada.gov website.

**Missouri Governor's
Council on Disability—
Council Members**

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Jason Schott, Ste. Genevieve
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

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- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Administrative Support Professional

2025 DISABILITY RIGHTS LEGISLATIVE DAY— SAVE THE DATE

by Claudia Browner



Each Spring, disability advocates from all areas of the state travel to the Missouri State Capitol in Jefferson City to rally for disability rights.

The date for the 2024 Disability Rights Legislative Day (DRLD) has been set for Wednesday, March 5, 2025. Mark your calendars now so you can attend and be part of this important advocacy day with state legislators.

Visit the DRLD website at drlld.org to keep up to date on information about the event.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

- **August 14, 2024**
[Senior Day at the Missouri State Fair, Sedalia](#)
- **August 25—27, 2024**
[Real Voices - Real Choices Conference, Margaritaville Lake Resort](#)
- **September 3—5, 2024**
[2024 Missouri Transit Conference & Expo](#)
- **September 9—11, 2024**
[Ma4 Show Me Summit on Aging & Health 2024, Springfield](#)
- **September 25, 2024**
[Missouri Mobility Management 2024 Virtual Summit](#)
- **September 26—27, 2024**
[Center for Disability Inclusion 2024 Inclusion Summit, Kansas City/virtual](#)
- **October 9—11, 2024**
[MACDDS Annual Conference, Columbia](#)

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

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OCTOBER IS NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH (NDEAM)

by Claudia Browner

Each year in October, National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) is celebrated nationwide to bring awareness to the importance of employment inclusion and recognize the contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

The theme for 2024, **'Access to Good Jobs for All,'** speaks to the commitment to expand the number and quality of employment opportunities for people with disabilities. Good jobs change lives and all workers including workers with disabilities deserve the opportunity to prepare for success in high-quality, good-paying jobs in workplaces free of discrimination.



What is NDEAM all about? Watch this video to learn more about the history and purpose of NDEAM and how you can participate

[Watch the NDEAM video](#)

This issue of the GCD Newsletter highlights the Governor's Council on Disability's (GCD) initiatives and outreach efforts to raise awareness about the importance of employment inclusion and improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities in Missouri. People with disabilities not only deserve equal opportunities in the application and hiring process, but also equal access to career paths and advancements during employment.

The Governor's Council on Disability supports these efforts through collaboration with state agencies on the [Model Employer initiative](#), raising awareness about the importance of inclusive and accessible workplaces through educational presentations and outreach, providing resources and information on the [NDEAM website](#), hosting an annual [GCD Poster Contest](#) to raise awareness about employment inclusion, and collaborating with the Office of Equal Opportunity to host the State of Missouri's first statewide [NDEAM celebration](#) in Jefferson City.

Please join the GCD in celebrating and recognizing NDEAM by participating in the NDEAM event and posting the 2024 GCD NDEAM poster at your workplace.

GCD ANNOUNCES THE 2024 NDEAM POSTER CONTEST WINNER

by Reece Ellis

October marks National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), a time to celebrate the contributions of workers with disabilities and promote the value of inclusive employment practices.

In Missouri, the Governor's Council on Disability commemorates this month with a poster contest, inviting artists from across the state to create designs that highlight employment inclusion. This year's winner is JP Sauter, an 11th grader from Benton High School, whose colorful and imaginative artwork will be featured statewide.

JP's inspiration for his design came from a place of pure creativity. "I just wanted to make it really colorful," he shared when describing his poster. "My imagination is what gave me the idea." JP first learned about the contest when his teacher introduced it as a fun class assignment.

What started as an in-class project quickly turned into a proud moment when JP was announced as the winner. "I felt super glad! I absolutely love doing art," he said. His enthusiasm for art is something that has been with him from a young age, starting with simple drawings on a doodle pad. Over the years, his doodles evolved into more detailed sketches, and today, art is something he enjoys doing "pretty much anywhere and everywhere." "I just ask for a pen," he said, emphasizing how often he finds himself drawing. His love for creating isn't limited to one style. "Sometimes I like to draw anime characters, but don't mistake me for some kind of weeb!" he joked.



JP's artistic interests are diverse—he enjoys drawing everything from video game characters like Super Mario to garden gnomes and random creatures. He also offered advice to other students who might want to try their hand at the contest or just explore their creative side: "Practice. Practice every day."

Outside of drawing, JP enjoys making memes and other funny creations online, but it's clear that art remains his primary passion. His teacher's encouragement to submit a poster has given him a platform to share his talent with the entire state. This October, JP's artwork will be displayed as part of NDEAM, spreading awareness about the significance of employment inclusion for people with disabilities. The Governor's Council on Disability is proud to showcase his talent, creativity, and message of inclusion. Congratulations to JP on this well-deserved achievement!

To learn more about the GCD NDEAM Poster contest, visit <https://disability.mo.gov/gcd/PosterContest>

STATE OF MISSOURI HOSTS NDEAM CELEBRATION

by Kim Hicks, Office of Equal Opportunity



You are invited to join the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) and Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) at the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) celebration on Monday, October 21, in the Harry S Truman Building, in Rooms 490 and 492 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM. We are excited to showcase exhibits from esteemed organizations such as the Special Olympics, Missouri Assistive Technology, Rehabilitation Services for The Blind, and the Missouri Department of Mental Health, to name a few. Our event will feature speakers and exhibitors from the Governor's Council on Disability, Missouri Department of Mental Health-Model Employer Workgroup, Missouri Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Missouri Mental Health Foundation, Developmental Disabilities Council, MoABLE, and the Office of Equal Opportunity. Rehabilitation Services for The Blind will offer free vision screenings, and sign language interpretation will be available during the event to ensure everyone in attendance can fully participate in the celebration.

Stay for an insightful keynote message from Lydia Olmstead. Lydia is the 2023 Youth Leadership Award winner and a past recipient of the Senator Chuck Graham Memorial Disability and Advocacy Ambassador Award.

Learn more at <https://oeo.mo.gov/2024-national-disability-employment-awareness-month-ndeam-celebration/>

STARKLOFF HOSTS DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT SUMMIT

by Claudia Browner

Thought leaders, industry experts, and change-makers gathered at Starkloff Disability Institute's 10th annual Disability Employment Summit on September 26 in St. Louis to share actionable strategies for promoting disability inclusion in the workplace and empower employers with the knowledge and tools to remove barriers and create inclusive environments where employees with disabilities are valued and have the opportunity to thrive.



Rebecca Cokley, US Disability Rights Program Office, FORD Foundation

Nationally renowned keynote speakers Rebecca Cokley and Vincenzo Piscopo delivered powerful and insightful messages about building workplace cultures that are ready to welcome the disability community. Breakout sessions facilitated discussions on best practices in Universal Design, Accommodations, and Self-ID Campaigns.

Networking opportunities for conference attendees lead to discussions on employment inclusion encompassing more than getting people with disabilities jobs, but also creating inclusive, accessible workplaces where the individuals have equal access and opportunities for advancement and retention.

The goal is to build work environments where team members feel valued and have a sense of belonging. This most often happens in organizations that clearly communicate their values surrounding workforce diversity and have leaders who openly support disability inclusion efforts.

More information about the Disability Employment Summit is available at <https://starkloff.org/disability-employment-summit/>



Emily Hartley, MO DD Council and Claudia Browner, GCD/OEO

STATE OF MISSOURI HOSTS REVERSE HIRING EVENT

by Claudia Browner

The State of Missouri is hosting a Reverse Hiring Event on October 29, 2024 from 9 a.m. to noon at the Special Olympics Missouri facility in Jefferson City. Job seekers with disabilities have the opportunity to participate in this event by contacting HiringEvents@oa.mo.gov to register.

Different from typical job fairs where job seekers visit with various employers, the reverse hiring event allows job seekers to provide displays, presentations, and resumes to showcase their skills, talents and career interests. The individuals have the opportunity to connect with State of Missouri recruiters looking to hire team members for a variety of state jobs in the different state departments.

If you are interested in participating or have questions about the event, please contact the Office of Administration's Recruitment Specialist Suzanne "Suzi" Stefaniak by email at Suzanne.stefaniak@oa.mo.gov or phone (573) 522-3688.

#hireMOTalent



Join the State of Missouri for a

REVERSE HIRING EVENT

This type of event provides a relaxed opportunity for employers to meet people with various educational needs and/or disabilities who are looking for employment.

Job seekers will create displays and presentations that showcase their talents in addition to providing resumes. State of Missouri recruiters can then circulate among the job seeker booths and connect with those whose skills and abilities meet their needs.

To register for your booth or if you have any questions, contact HiringEvents@oa.mo.gov

Please note that space is limited to 60 spots.

October 29, 2024
9 a.m. to Noon

Special Olympics Missouri
305 Special Olympics Drive
Jefferson City, MO 65101

MOCareers
No Serve Missouri
#hireMOTalent

2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL NOW OPEN

by Laura Mueth

The legislative poll addresses various topics including housing, transportation, education, healthcare and employment. In keeping with our newsletter theme of October as National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM), we want to highlight that you can provide feedback on the topic of employment by completing the poll!



NOW OPEN

We look forward to receiving your feedback!

You are invited to participate in the Governor's Council on Disability's **Legislative Priorities Poll**

disability.mo.gov/gcd/legislative_priorities_poll.htm

Do you have thoughts on employment of people with disabilities that you would like to share with state legislators, state elected officials, and our agency? One way to do that is through the 2024 Legislative Priorities Poll.

All available formats can be found on the [Annual Legislative Priorities Poll](#) web page. Our staff is available to assist anyone who has difficulty understanding the questions or completing the poll independently. To receive assistance, call 800-877-8249.

Please return all polls by **Friday, November 1, 2024 at 5:00 PM.**

Alternate format versions can be returned to our office via fax to 573-526-4109, email to gcd@oa.mo.gov, or mail: Governor's Council on Disability, 301 West High Street, Room 620, PO Box 1668, Jefferson City, MO 65102-1668.

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Jason Schott, Ste. Genevieve
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Staff Members

- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Administrative Support Professional

MISSOURI RANKS #1 IN APPRENTICESHIPS

by Claudia Browner



The State of Missouri is currently ranked first in the nation for providing registered apprenticeships for individuals with disabilities!

Registered apprenticeships provide a proved workforce solution that promotes diversity and inclusion in the workplace. Apprenticeships combine on the job learning and instruction with related educational instruction.

To learn more about Missouri's apprenticeship programs, please visit the Department of Higher Education & Workforce Development's [Apprenticeship Missouri](https://www.dhewd.mo.gov/apprenticeship) web page or send an email to apprenticeship@dhewd.mo.gov

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

- **October 9—11, 2024**
[MACDDS Annual Conference, Columbia](#)
- **October 21, 2024**
[National Disability Employment Awareness Month \(NDEAM\) Celebration](#)

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.



GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY

GCD NEWSLETTER

Volume 10, Number 6, December 2024

[Governor's Council on Disability](#)

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RECOGNIZING LEADERS IN INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP

by Claudia Browner

THE GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITY IS ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS NOW FOR THE 2024 ANNUAL INCLUSION AND YOUTH LEADERSHIP AWARDS

As the year 2024 is coming to a close, the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) is looking to honor and recognize this year's leaders in inclusion and youth leadership.

The [Inclusion Award](#) (33rd year) is presented annually to recognize private and public employers, individuals, businesses or organizations that have worked toward greater disability inclusion by taking exceptional, proactive, and innovative measures to integrate and mainstream people with disabilities into their programs, activities, and operations.

The nomination form and criteria for the Inclusion Award are available [here](#).

The [Youth Leadership Award](#) (12th year) recognizes an outstanding Missouri youth (age 16-26) with a disability that has demonstrated exemplary leadership by engaging in activities that improve the quality of life of people with disabilities in their communities in Missouri. The nomination form and criteria for the Youth Leadership Award are available [here](#).

Nominate now—the nomination deadline is January 31!

Nominations now open for the Governor's Council on Disability's

2024 Inclusion Awards

Nominations due **January 31, 2025**

Recognizing leaders in Inclusion



disability.mo.gov/gcd/inclusionawards (573) 751-2600

Nominations now open for the Governor's Council on Disability's

2024 Youth Leadership Awards

Nominations due **January 31, 2025**

Recognizing leaders in Youth Leadership



disability.mo.gov/gcd/youthleadershipawards (573) 751-2600

2024 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES POLL RESULTS

by Laura Mueth



The 2024 Legislative Priorities Poll ended the first day of November. Four hundred ninety-seven people representing 71 of Missouri's counties completed it. The 2025 legislative priorities for the Governor's Council on Disability will be:

- The State of Missouri updating websites to include more language that is direct and easy to understand for those with reading or writing difficulties
- The Personal Care Attendant/Aide/Direct Support Professional workforce providing critical services
- Transportation needs
- Care workforce needs

The first two priorities were determined by combining the two highest "strongly agree" and "agree" response percentages. The remaining two are need areas expressed throughout all the open response questions.

An interactive dashboard and a written report showing the results for all the questions will be posted soon on the [Annual Legislative Priorities Poll page](#). These materials and all open answer responses will be shared with representatives, senators, and elected officials when the legislative session begins in January.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to contribute this year.

REGISTRATION OPEN NOW FOR 2025 LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION PROJECT WEBINARS

by Laura Mueth

The Governor's Council on Disability sponsors the Legislative Education Project (LEP) during the legislative session to provide an opportunity for individuals or organizations to learn about the legislative process in Missouri and learn additional information regarding disability policies or proposed legislation that impact people with disabilities.

The purpose of the LEP is to educate and motivate individuals by providing opportunities to become more active in creating positive public policies for people with disabilities.

Legislative Education Project (LEP) webinars will be offered four times in 2025 at no cost to participants. The format and content will be the same each time. The topics covered will be the legislative process, communicating with legislators, and current state bills related to disability. Webex software will be used to conduct each webinar.



Registration is required. Please complete the [LEP webinars registration form](#) to register for one of the following dates:

- January 2, 2025, 9:00-10:30 AM
- January 30, 2025, 9:00-10:30 AM
- February 27, 2025, 7:00-8:30 PM
- March 13, 2025, 1:00-2:30 PM

Scan QR code to register



Additional information about the LEP can be found on the [LEP web page](#).

CELEBRATING INCLUSION: MISSOURI'S INAUGURAL NDEAM EVENT

by Reece Ellis

On October 21, the Missouri Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO) and Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) hosted the state's first National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Celebration at the Harry S Truman Building in Jefferson City. This landmark event emphasized the value of inclusive hiring practices and celebrated the contributions of individuals with disabilities in the workforce.

Claudia Browner, Executive Director of the Governor's Council on Disability (GCD) and Acting Director of the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO), opened the ceremony by presenting the governor's proclamation in recognition of NDEAM. Disability advocate and MO-YLF alum Kayla Patek followed with a stirring vocal performance of the national anthem, setting the tone for a day focused on awareness and empowerment.

The program included recognition of JP Sauter, a high school student from St. Joseph and winner of the 2024 NDEAM Poster Contest. JP's poster, which highlights the importance of inclusive workplaces, will be displayed across state agencies, and featured on the GCD website.



NDEAM planning committee members with Lydia Olmsted and Kayla Patek

Speakers shared their personal journeys and demonstrated the power of meaningful employment for people with disabilities:

- Shirlene Treadwell, a longtime Special Olympics athlete, shared how her involvement in athletics prepared her for success in manufacturing and customer service.
- Brittani Dagen, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker and Certified Reciprocal Alcohol and Drug Counselor, delivered a heartfelt message about overcoming depression and addiction. Brittani highlighted the transformative role of Vocational Rehabilitation, noting, "Good jobs change lives."
- Lydia Olmstead, keynote speaker and disability employment advocate, shared her journey advocating for reasonable accommodations, particularly for those in the Deafblind community, and stressed the invaluable contributions individuals with disabilities bring to workplaces. Lydia is a MO-YLF alum and winner of the 2023 Youth Leadership Award.



Shirlene Treadwell



JP Sauter



Brittani Degan

Additional photos and the video of the NDEAM event are available [here](#)

In addition to the presentations, the event featured an exhibit area with organizations offering resources for employers seeking to enhance disability inclusion. Including Special Olympics Missouri, Missouri Assistive Technology, The Office of Administration, The Independent Living Resource Center, Missouri Centers for Independent Living, The Department of Mental Health, Vocational Rehabilitation, Missouri Mental Health Foundation, Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council, MoABLE, Rehabilitation Services for The Blind, and NaviLens.

The GCD looks forward to supporting and expanding these efforts to promote disability inclusion across the state. Thank you to all who made this event possible and to those who continue to champion disability awareness and employment inclusion.

APPLY NOW! APPLICATIONS OPEN FOR 21ST MISSOURI YOUTH LEADERSHIP FORUM

by Reece Ellis

The Governor's Council on Disability is excited to announce that applications are now open for the 2025 [Missouri Youth Leadership Forum \(MO-YLF\)](#)!

This unique, weeklong leadership experience will take place July 15–19, 2025, on the University of Missouri campus in Columbia. MO-YLF is designed to empower high school students with disabilities (ages 16–21) to become confident leaders and advocates in their communities.



Each year, approximately 30 delegates from across Missouri come together to:

- Build Leadership Skills through workshops on self-advocacy, goal-setting, and self-determination.
- Explore Disability Rights and Culture with peers and mentors who share lived experiences.
- Experience Civic Engagement by participating in a mock legislative session and visiting the state Capitol.
- Connect with Community through social activities like a talent show, adaptive sports, and more.

MO-YLF provides a life-changing opportunity for young people to prepare for success in education, employment, and independent living—all in a supportive, inclusive environment. Thanks to our generous sponsors, the program is offered at no cost to delegates.

Applications are due by March 31, 2025. For more details or to apply, visit www.disability.mo.gov/gcd/ylf. If you have any questions about the GCD's youth programs, please contact Reece Ellis at reece.ellis@oa.mo.gov or 573-751-2600.

Please help us share this exciting leadership training opportunity with students, parents, teachers, and colleagues!

EXPERIENCE MO-YLF THROUGH OUR NEW VIDEO

We're excited to share a brand-new promotional video for the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF)! Created by the Office of Administration's communications team using footage from this past year's Forum, the video highlights the impact of the program through the voices and experiences of some of those who make it meaningful.

The video features interviews with parents of delegates who share the transformative impact MO-YLF has had on their children, as well as insights from a couple of our dedicated staff members, Tatem Petet and Letiah Fraser. Their perspectives shine a light on the program's mission to empower young leaders and build a stronger disability community.

Whether you're a parent, teacher, or student considering applying, this video provides an authentic and heartfelt glimpse into the Forum. We encourage you to watch the video and share it widely to help more students and families learn about this incredible opportunity.

Watch the video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eKzvi_BKBPO



REGISTER FOR AN INFORMATIONAL WEBINAR ABOUT MO-YLF



December 16, 2024 5:30 - 6:30 PM
 January 15, 2025 2:00 - 3:00 PM
 February 6, 2025 5:00 - 6:00 PM
 March 11, 2025 2:30 - 3:30 PM

Register at
<https://tinyurl.com/moylf-webinars>





The Governor's Council on Disability is offering **free informational webinars** for the Missouri Youth Leadership Forum (MO-YLF). Each webinar will include information on what takes place during MO-YLF, what the benefits are for a student to attend, and information on the application process.

All prospective delegates, educators, service providers, and families are welcome to register and attend! Registration is required to attend.

Please register at <https://tinyurl.com/moylf-webinars>

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON DISABILITY RELEASES ANNUAL REPORT

by Claudia Browner



The National Council on Disability (NCD) published its annual report on October 31, reviewing governmentwide disability policy developments. The report highlights issues relating to the health status and healthcare of people with disabilities, employment, travel, transportation, accessible technology, housing and the US census. The NCD report provides information on progress made in achieving disability policies and identifies new and emerging issues to be addressed.

The full report is available for download at

<https://www.ncd.gov/report/national-disability-policy-a-progress-report-2024/>

VETERANS DAY CELEBRATION

by Kim Hicks, Office of Equal Opportunity

The Governor's Council on Disability recently joined the Office of Equal Opportunity in hosting a statewide gathering to pay tribute to the courageous men and women who have served in the armed forces. This annual statewide Veterans Day Celebration serves as a heartfelt reminder of their sacrifices and dedication as we reflect on their unwavering commitment to protecting our freedoms.

This year's celebration began with the Smith-Cotton JROTC Posting of the Colors, followed by the National Anthem sung by Caroline Coulter, Deputy Commissioner and General Counsel for the Office of Administration. A series of speeches followed, offering heartfelt tributes to those who have served. Among the speakers were Missouri Lieutenant Governor Mike Kehoe, Executive Director Paul Kirchhoff of the Missouri Veterans Commission, State Representative Dave Griffith, and Missouri Department of Revenue Director Wayne Wallingford, who delivered the keynote message. Throughout the day, attendees had the opportunity to engage with various veterans' organizations and learn about the resources and supports available to those who have served.

The 135th Army Marching Band brought the annual ceremony to a close with a series of stirring renditions of beloved patriotic songs. Their performance resonated throughout the building, creating an atmosphere filled with reverence and gratitude. Reflecting on this year's celebration, we are reminded of veterans' profound impact on our state and society.

Our annual Veterans Day event is more than just a day of recognition; it is a reaffirmation of our commitment to honoring and supporting those who have served. We look forward to continuing this tradition, ensuring that the sacrifices of our veterans are never forgotten.



Missouri Governor's Council on Disability—Council Members

- Ronald Hack, Council Chair, St. Louis
- Steve Ahrens, Jefferson City
- Charles Comstock, Kirksville
- Stacey Elster, Wildwood
- Wayne Crawford, Marshall
- Betty Davidson, Ph.D., St. Louis
- Chip Hailey, Joplin
- Rosemary Hendon, West Plains
- Katie Jones, St. Charles
- Kim Lackey, St. Louis
- Elijah Mayfield, Jefferson City
- Susan Orton, Creve Coeur
- Andrew Sartorius, Jefferson City
- Jason Schott, Ste. Genevieve
- Lesia Shelton, Buffalo
- Robert Wallace, St. Louis

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- Claudia Browner, Executive Director
- Reece Ellis, Senior Program Specialist
- Laura Mueth, Senior Program Specialist
- Jennifer Pettit, Administrative Support Professional

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION ANNOUNCES CHANGES TO IN-PERSON SERVICES

by Claudia Browner

The [Social Security Administration](#) (SSA) recently announced moving to appointment-based services at their local Social Security offices in an effort to reduce wait times and streamline service delivery.

Effective January 6, 2025, the SSA will require customers to schedule an appointment for services in its local offices, including requests for Social Security cards. The SSA encourages customers to familiarize themselves with:

[Online services](#) for transactions that can be completed conveniently and securely, and

[Automated services](#) available through calling the national toll-free number 1-800-772-1213

Customers who are not able to conduct their business online or with the automated phone options may call their local Social Security office or toll-free number to schedule an appointment. The SSA emphasized that vulnerable populations or individuals requiring immediate or specialized attention may still walk in for services.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Check out these upcoming disability-related conferences and events! Click on the links to learn more or register.

February 3—5, 2025

[Virtual Winter ADA Conference](#)

February 23, 2025

[Disability Awareness Convention](#), hosted by The Arya Foundation, Chesterfield

February 26, 2025

[Disability Rights Legislative Day](#), Jefferson City

May 5—7, 2025

[Virtual ADA Symposium](#)

May 28—30, 2025

[Missouri Rehabilitation Association \(MRA\) Conference](#), Lake of the Ozarks

June 15—18, 2025

[National ADA Symposium](#), Atlanta, Georgia

July 15-19, 2025

[Missouri Youth Leadership Forum](#), Columbia

If you know of other events you would like us to share with the disability community, please contact our office.

STAY CONNECTED

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